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Westminster Lectures

SECOND SERIES

MIRACLES

BY

GIDEON W. B. MARSH

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WESTMINSTER LECTURES

(SECOND SERIES)

EDITED BY REV. FRANCIS AVELING, D.D.

MIRACLES

BY

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PREFACE

In this age of "Rationalism" we are told that Christianity would in the main be acceptable if it were purged of its miraculous element, and certain authors have accordingly attempted to write a life of Christ from which all miracles are excluded. As well might they compile a life of Cæsar and omit all reference to his wars. The tendency in certain quarters to minimise the miraculous, to explain it away, or to reduce it to fable and allegory, arises from this spirit. To a large extent this is due to a misunderstanding as to the nature of the miraculous, and its relation to the great First Cause and to natural laws and forces. It is therefore eminently desirable that this should be clearly stated, and it is with this object that the present lecture was prepared. The subject is a vast one, the space allowed for its treatment very limited, but the author trusts that in some small way these pages may be of

service to those who have not the time to devote more extended study to the matter. The fundamental difficulty to the disbeliever in miracles will be found to be a misconception of the nature and attributes of God. If the First Cause be not recognised as Infinite and Personal, no amount of argument will be likely to carry a conviction of the possibility and probability of the miraculous. It is therefore of the highest importance that this primary truth should be studied and apprehended before proceeding to consider the evidence which may be adduced for the subject of this lecture.

G. W. B. MARSH.

WESTMINSTER,
20th May 1906.

MIRACLES

Among the various schools of philosophy which exist in this twentieth century there are two which occupy a great share of popular attention. Introduction

The Materialists assert that there is nothing in the universe but matter, and that what we call mind or soul is but one of its aspects. Matter, when arranged in such a way as to constitute a human being, is possessed of certain qualities or powers which we call thought and volition, but once that particular arrangement is broken up, as in death, there is nothing that survives with the continued power of thinking and willing.

The other school, whose champion is Haeckel, would have us believe that force and matter are but two aspects of the same reality.

These two schools alike teach that there is no such thing as mind or soul, in the sense in which Christian philosophers use that word.

According to them, there is no immortality, and no Intelligent and Personal First Cause of all things. They bid us recognise in Nature only blind forces, inexorable laws, that are from eternity and unto eternity—that can know no change, no deviation, from their onward course. Human suffering and sorrow can find no sympathy, no alleviation, from them, and the race of man is but a passing evolution in the development of these hard and stern taskmasters.

There is, however, another school of thinkers and investigators, which is coming rapidly into prominence. I refer to the Spiritualists, whose ranks are being joined by some of the best scientists of the day. As a result of their researches, they declare that beside matter, there is mind or soul, as a real substance which survives bodily death, and they infer this from phenomena observed by their senses. It is to be noted that they make this admission as an inference from what they see and hear, and not as a deduction from the operations of the soul.

Whatever may be thought of these investigators, it is indisputable, and is daily becoming clearer, that their researches in the spirit world

are steadily gaining the assent of many who have hitherto been, if not absolute disbelievers, at all events, agnostics in matters relating to the world of the non-material.

Naturally, the man who believes in pure materialism, or in the existence of mere blind forces or laws, finds no place in his interpretation of Nature, for the soul or for God.

On the other hand, the Spiritualist is driven by his experimental belief into the position that there is a great First Intelligence, or at least that His Existence is rendered probable by that of the spirit world.

To the believer in mere matter and force, a miracle is of course an impossibility: to the Spiritualist a miracle is a possibility, if there is a God; but most so-called miracles are, according to his hypothesis, explicable by the powers possessed by spirits in their dealings with the world of matter. The mind of man is observed to work on matter, and hence it is inferred that spiritual substances have the like power, an inference which seems to gain support from the phenomena observed at séances.

No less an authority than Huxley tells us that "No one is entitled to say *a priori* that

any given so-called miraculous event is impossible,"[1] and the records of the human race all the world over bear testimony to the universal belief in miracles, and to their actual occurrence. It is incredible that men of all nations, times, and places should have conspired in deliberately alleging that which is untrue. It is equally incredible that these same people should all have been deceived, ignorant and learned alike, in a matter concerning sense experience.

Universal Testimony to Miracles

Miracles are, therefore, if not probable, at least worthy of examination even by the scientists of the twentieth century.

It may be argued that the greater the advance of science the fewer do miracles become, and that when sufficient progress has been made, all these miraculous occurrences will be capable of a natural explanation.

I fully grant that many things which have been deemed miraculous owing to insufficient knowledge of the powers of nature, are clearly not so, but there still remains, and must remain, a number of events that are of their very nature not explicable by any known or

[1] Huxley, *Science and Christian Tradition*, collected essays, vol. v., p. 138.

possible natural laws—events which absolutely transcend all the forces of Nature. And these are what I mean by miracles in the true sense of the word.

We are thus brought to a consideration of what constitutes a miracle. The word has been very loosely used to denote something wonderful. The telephone, the telegraph, the steam engine would have been miraculous in this sense of the word to our forefathers of a thousand years ago, but they are not miracles after all. Miracles are always the wonderful, but the wonderful is not always the miraculous.

Now, what is the definition that is accepted by the best Christian philosophers and thinkers? With S. Thomas Aquinas I define a miracle as a sensible effect produced by God, which transcends all the forces of Nature.[1]

Definition

Let us first of all consider our definition, and what it implies. In all philosophical, as in all scientific study, it is always of the first importance that we should precisely define the subject under discussion, and have a clear meaning for the words we are employing.

[1] S. Thomæ: *Contra Gentiles*, III., c. ci.; *Summa*, p. I, q. cv., art. vii.

It at once cuts away the ground upon which many misapprehensions and difficulties may arise.

A miracle is a "sensible effect," that is to say, it is a phenomenon—something which is capable of being observed by the senses. It is intended to be seen by men, and hence it is subject to the laws of evidence.

A miracle, moreover, is *an effect*, and therefore must have a cause. The human mind is so constituted that on seeing a phenomenon, it at once proceeds to ask the *why* of it. Indeed, true knowledge is the intellectual apprehension of things through their causes. Now science is concerned with phenomena, their grouping, classification, and arrangement. Philosophy deals with the reality and nature of things in themselves.[1]

(*a*) A Miracle is an Effect

In examining natural phenomena, we seek to find the cause, and having succeeded, we observe that the effect always follows on the action of that cause. Hence numerous experiments are possible whereby this causality may be demonstrated and confirmed. It is this very mode of proof

(*b*) Cause of the Miraculous

[1] See *Science and Faith* in this series of Westminster Lectures.

that some scientific men demand for the miraculous. "Raise a dead body under test conditions in the presence of a number of scientific men: repeat your operation on several bodies, and then let us produce the same effect by the same means, and we will believe in your miracles," say they. In this very statement they show a total misapprehension of the nature of a miracle. If such a phenomenon as the resurrection of the dead were capable of experimental proof and demonstration, it would be merely a natural effect, explicable sooner or later by forces that exist in the world of matter, and there would be nothing miraculous in it. Miracles are, however, of their very nature not experimental effects that can be produced at pleasure. These scientists forget that the cause in such cases is removed entirely from the possibilities of the forces and laws that hold in the universe. It is the Divine Will which acts as the cause, when and how It deems best. God is ever willing, when the need arises, to work a miracle, but there is no necessity compelling Him to do so, as happens in the case of a natural law or force. Posit the latter and the effect follows, but not so with the

Will of God. The same holds good, though in an infinitely lower degree, with man. By his will he can work a certain effect, but he can also refuse to produce it. The mere positing of the human will is not necessarily followed by that effect.

In my definition I have stated that God is the cause of the miraculous. He is, of course, the First Cause of everything that exists. The world, which is alleged to have been evolved from structureless ether in the course of millions of years, has God for its Author. It is then clearly not in that sense that I employ the word "cause," but in some other and more direct way. In a miracle God acts "here and now," and either directly by and of Himself, or by delegating the power to a creature with an express command to act for Him and in His Name. In either case God is the cause of the effect produced, and in a much more direct manner than in that of the world's development.

God the cause of miracles

Directly or by delegation

I have said that God may delegate miraculous power to a creature. In this lecture I am dealing with my subject from a philosophical and historical standpoint, and do not

assume any of the data of Revealed Religion. Now it is chiefly through Revelation and History that we know of the existence of Intelligences other than human, and I am not, therefore, going to assume it, but only to say that if there are such beings, then we may rationally suppose that they are of a higher order of intellect than our own, and are also capable of becoming delegates of the miraculous power. It is conceivable that such Intelligences acting on matter by their *natural* powers, could produce what to us mortals would be a *præternatural* effect, but this would fall short of the nature of a miracle, unless such Intelligences had received the express command of God to perform the act. This, then, is what I mean when I say that a miracle is an effect produced by God. He must directly cause it, or give the power so to do, to a creature, with the express command to act in His Name.

A miracle, moreover, must be an event which *transcends* the forces of Nature. It must go beyond and exceed the capabilities of the natural order, but that does not mean that it must *violate*, *suspend*, or be *contrary* to them. The introduction of such words into the definition

(c) A Miracle transcends the forces of Nature

of the miraculous is unwarrantable and contrary to fact, and has given rise to much discussion and many misunderstandings. Hume, for instance, has defined a miracle as "a *violation* of the laws of Nature," which it is not, and then on this basis has raised his famous structure of arguments against the miraculous. I shall have to deal with this a little later.

Some writers have said that a miracle is an effect which transcends the "*known*" laws of Nature. According to this definition, we can never be sure of the occurrence of a miracle, as at some future time it may be explained by a better knowledge of the forces that prevail in the universe of matter. This will be seen more clearly as we proceed. Others again have declared that a miracle is something which is *contrary* to natural laws, or which *suspends* them. All these definitions, as we shall show, are faulty and misleading, and give rise to many of the difficulties which are urged against the miraculous.

I have stated that "a miracle is a sensible effect produced by God, which transcends all the forces of Nature," a definition which, for the present, must be taken as granted, but which will be proved in the course of this

lecture by its showing itself capable of explaining the nature of the miraculous, and by the evidence which will be adduced in its favour.

Let us then continue our development of the subject, by asking ourselves in how many ways an event of this kind may transcend or go beyond the forces of Nature. There are three, and thus we have three grades of the miraculous.

Three ways in which a Miracle is impossible to Nature

In the first place, the miracle may be wholly and entirely beyond the known or possible powers of Nature, in any case, or under any circumstances. It is, for instance, quite impossible physically for two bodies to be in one and the same place at the same time. Every physical body has certain dimensions, and these bear an exact relation to the space occupied by it, so exact a relationship, that the simultaneous presence in the same space, of another body, is physically impossible.

First Rank

(1) Wholly and entirely impossible

It is only by divine power that the accidental quality of dimension can be removed from a body, so that it may co-exist in the same place and time as another body, and yet remain distinct from it.

Assuming the Divinity of Christ, this *may* have occurred, for instance, when after His resurrection He passed through closed doors; but another and natural explanation is at least possible, and we know that God does not usually use a higher power where a lower will effect His purposes.

In certain præternatural phenomena it is alleged that materialised Intelligences enter and leave a room under the same conditions. This interpenetration of bodies becomes more comprehensible when we consider the nature of matter in the light of modern science. Matter is composed of atoms which contain corpuscles, and according to one theory, these are again resolvable into electrons. But between the atoms and corpuscles is the structureless ether. In other words, every material body is made up of a more or less closely arranged mass of particles with spaces between them, and it is precisely through those spaces that the particles of another body may pass. This occurs in the case of the B rays emitted by radium. These are material particles which are given off from the radium, and they are found readily to "pass through cloth, paper, and wood, and even thin

Nature of "Matter"

sheets of metal, especially the light metal aluminium, but are practically all stopped by a dense metal equal in thickness to a penny-piece."[1]

The X rays can so penetrate the human body as to give a skiagraph, and enable us to see the exact spot where a bullet is lodged, or where a fracture has taken place. But these rays, which are themselves material, must pass between the component particles of the flesh, and so effect an entry. They never simultaneously occupy the same space as do any of the particles of flesh.

Thus light may be thrown on the passage of the risen body of Christ through closed doors, assuming that it was, though glorified, still material; and also we can in some way understand the alleged penetration of matter by materialised Intelligences. It must, however, be borne in mind that "the resurrection body" possesses properties and powers not pertaining to the natural body, and that it is no longer subject to the ordinary laws of matter. This suggestion is only intended to show that matter being interpenetrable, it is

[1] *Radium Explained*, by Dr W. Hampson, M.A., Jack & Co., 1905.

possible that Divine power could have caused the passage of Christ's body through closed doors, without working a miracle of the *first rank*, or possibly without the operation of any strictly so-called miracle at all.

Second Rank

(2) Impossible to Nature in particular case

A certain effect may be impossible to Nature in the particular case before us, whilst the thing in itself may not be so impossible. Its occurrence would belong to miracles of the second rank.

The mere forces of Nature, for example, give life to animals and vegetables, but they never have given, nor can they give, renewed human life to a human corpse. That is something which transcends them entirely.

Nearly all scientists allow that such an occurrence would indeed be miraculous. Huxley, however, has said that given such a case, the phenomenon would, after due investigation and corroboration, only point to the existence of some hitherto unknown law, which would have to be incorporated into and modify the laws of Nature as we now know them. In other words, it would be no miracle at all.

This is as much an assumption as, according to Huxley, it is to assert a miraculous cause.

Invariable experience establishes the fact that Nature never raises the dead to life. If, therefore, we eventually find that Nature can do so, our "law" is no longer true, and what becomes of the stability, nay, the very existence of Science, for at any moment the best attested facts and doctrines of scientists may be all upset! Science and certainty, laws of Nature, and the value of experience are at an end.

As well might it be argued that if a child a month old were suddenly to become a man, with the mental and physical development of the age of forty years, no miracle had occurred, and we need but adjust our ideas of the capabilities of Nature. There is a limit to the powers of natural forces, and there is also a limit to the credulity of the human mind.

If such phenomena as the resurrection of the dead, and the instantaneous development to maturity of an infant, are mere natural occurrences, then, as I have said, there is at once an end to all certainty and reasoning—an end to all the continuity and stability of the laws of Nature, and science becomes an impossibility.

Third Rank

(3) Impossible to Nature in particular manner

But there is yet another way in which the miraculous may occur. Nature may be able to work the effect in question, and in the particular case before us, but not in the particular *manner* in which it has been worked. This forms the third rank of the miraculous.

The surgeon may obtain union of the two ends of a broken bone, kept in proper position, and at rest, for a certain length of time, but he cannot by any natural means obtain immediate and instantaneous healing, by a word of command or a gesture.

Thus we have miracles of three different grades, but all are alike really and truly miraculous, and, in their different spheres, equally impossible to natural forces.

Can a miracle ever be contrary to or violate laws of Nature

Now I have said that a miracle is an effect which transcends or goes beyond all the powers of Nature. Can it ever be *contrary* to those powers? In other words, with Hume, is it ever a *violation* of the laws of Nature?

Let us consider the position. God acts in His physical creation in a definite way, and the observance of this regularity man calls

the laws of Nature. They are but the expression of the Divine Will, and we must ever remember that these are but a part of the great and universal plan of God's providence. The Omnipotent can never stultify Himself, and so no miracles can ever be contrary to or violate this universal law. Some particular law may seem to be in opposition to a general one, but it is only in seeming, and there is no such thing as chance. Yet there is a sense in which a miracle may be said to be contrary to some particular law; not indeed contrary in the true sense of the word, but only figuratively. Some writers prefer to call it a suspension of a particular law in a given case, but even this is incorrect. The forces of Nature act and react upon each other, without any violation or real opposition, and without suspending each other.

Let us take an example. When a man picks up a stone and holds it at a distance of say three feet from the ground, he partly overcomes the attraction of gravity which tends to keep that stone upon the ground, but he does so by bringing into play a higher natural force. The attraction continues to act all the time, but its effect is modified. There

is here no violation of the law of gravity, no suspension of it, nothing contrary to it.

Now let us take an alleged example of the miraculous, and see how this applies in such a case. Let us consider, for example, the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea on the occasion of the passage of the Israelites. I am not here alleging that such an occurrence took place or did not do so, as this is beyond the scope of my lecture. I merely wish to show how, if this incident be a fact and a miracle, it would still not have violated any law of Nature.

The waters, we are told, were heaped up as walls on either side, and the chosen people passed safely between them. It is certainly not natural for the waters of a sea so to act. Their tendency is to keep together in a compact mass. This division might have been accomplished naturally by engineering processes, when we should have had an example like the one already given, in which, whilst the nature of water and its inclination to union would still have continued, yet another law would have been brought into play, whereby the water was prevented from carrying into effect its natural disposition. The

laws of hydrostatics would, however, have still remained unimpaired.

But in this case of the Red Sea, at a mere gesture of command, without the employment of any other natural forces, the waters obey and suspend, not their nature, nor their laws, but the carrying into action of that nature and of those laws, and here we have the miraculous. In this case the great First Cause steps in and transcends natural power by the exercise of His will, yet without violating or suspending any laws of hydrostatics. If a natural force can do so, as we have already seen that it can, surely the Author of Nature can bring about the same effect by other than natural means, for He has not emptied His infinity of power in the universe known to us.

As John Stuart Mill has said, "When the human will acts upon the external world, and produces a sensible effect, it does not thereby violate any laws of Nature." "The interference of human will with the course of Nature is not an exception to law, and by the same rule, interference by the Divine Will would not be an exception either."[1]

[1] *Three Essays*, p. 227.

A miracle, then, can never violate the universal law of God's providence, whilst it may prevent the carrying into effect of some particular law.

(*d*) A miracle transcends all possible forces of Nature

And now we come to a consideration of the last item in our definition of the miraculous. We have seen that a miracle is a sensible effect worked by God, and that it transcends the forces of Nature: but our definition implies that it transcends all its known, unknown, and possible forces.

I have already pointed out that if there is to be such a thing as a miracle, it must transcend all the possible forces of Nature, or else the miraculous could not be; for if a miracle merely transcends known law, as knowledge increases, it is possible that alleged miraculous occurrences may prove explicable on natural grounds. We know that there are certain things which Nature can never do under any circumstances, such, for instance, as giving renewed human life to a dead human body. Science laughs to scorn the mere idea of such an occurrence. Unless we know enough about certain powers of Nature, we can have no laws of Nature, at least none

but such as are liable at any moment to be upset by a new discovery, and thus our "laws" would not be real laws at all, and we never could have any certain knowledge or any real science. New discoveries, as in the case of the atomic theory, may modify and cause a re-rendering of the laws as now known, but can never upset or be opposed to them, that is to say, if what science asserts to be really observed laws are such. I refer, of course, to the great, well-demonstrated, and fundamental laws of Nature. Sufficient scientific and general observation and experiment have established the facts that Nature never gives renewed human life to a human corpse, that broken bones do not unite instantaneously, that deep and suppurating wounds demand time for repair, that all men die, and so on. So much, then, for the consideration in detail of the definition of the miraculous which I have laid down.

Possibility of Miracles

And now I pass on to ask whether a miracle is possible or not.

God is The Infinite and Necessary Being. Every created thing, whether actual or possible, is finite and contingent. It is impossible even to the great First Cause

to produce an absolutely infinite effect, for such an effect would be God Himself, and so we should have two absolute infinites, which is an absurdity.

God can, therefore, never empty or exhaust His Power in the creation of any possible number of beings. There is and must be, so to speak, always an infinite reserve of power left in God, and so He is ever able to act in His dealings with a creature in other ways than those which He has laid down as the ordinary laws of its being. He can produce the same effects as are produced by the forces He has created, without employing those forces, as He can also produce effects which are utterly beyond their capabilities, and so of necessity a miracle is always possible.

To put it briefly, the Infinite can never delegate the whole of His power to a creature without ceasing to be God, and so the miraculous must be possible in any and every creation.

We are thus enabled to see the error of the Pantheistic position as laid down in Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*, wherein we are told that Nature is the full manifestation of God's power, and is hence one with Him. A

miracle, according to this doctrine, would mean that God was acting against Himself, and would therefore be an absurdity. God is The Infinite and Necessary Being, whilst Nature is clearly finite and contingent. It follows, therefore, that Nature cannot be God, and also that the miraculous is possible.

We ask again, Can God work a miracle?

To Him all things that are not self-contradictory are a possibility. Without God, of course, miracles are impossible.

To the Atheist, if such there be, to the Agnostic and the Rationalist, the Pantheist and the Deist, who deny, or doubt, or are uncertain about the existence and nature of God, I do not address myself. This has been done in a previous lecture of the last course. I am here speaking to those who admit the great First Cause, Infinite and Personal. To such, the mere existence of God is a sufficient pledge of the possibility of the miraculous.

But there is a form in which this question may be put, that at first sight may raise difficulties.

How can God act against the very laws that He Himself has laid down? Does not

this entail uncertainty or change in God and in His designs? To begin with, this objection implies that a miracle is opposed to the laws of Nature, and we have already seen that such is not the case. But let us consider the matter yet further.

It is true that all the laws which govern the universe, and all the forces which we see at work, come from God. It is equally true that certain self-evident truths come from Him. But there is all the difference in the world between these two sets of principles. The self-evident truths are necessary and immutable to God Himself, and even He could not change them. Omnipotence could not make it possible, for example, that a thing could both exist and not exist at the same time, or that, mathematically speaking, a circle could at once be a circle and a triangle; because God is Truth and therefore He cannot contradict Himself. The physical laws that govern the universe of matter are of a different order. They are not necessary, neither are they immutable. They are contingent. They might have been otherwise, and God could have produced the same physical effects by many other means, and in many other ways.

He might have created the world very differently, and subject to a wholly different class of forces, and yet have had exactly the same result. Indeed, He was not bound to create at all, and hence the very existence of the world is a contingent, and not a necessary, event. Thus, whilst God cannot act against the fundamental laws of reason, or against the universal law of His own Providence, without stultifying Himself, and ceasing to be God, He can, without doing so, change, abolish, or modify any of the contingent laws which He has laid down, although in the miraculous, as we have seen, this does not necessarily occur.

Again, in so far as miracles, which are always empirically observed facts, may in some sense be said to be exceptions to the ordinary working of some particular law, if God is what He has been shown to be, Infinite in His knowledge as in His power, He must have foreknown and pre-ordained those very exceptions, as part of His divine plan for ruling the universe. They form part of that higher and universal order of His Providence which He decreed from all eternity, and hence involve no change or instability on the part of God.

The Deist would maintain that miracles imply an imperfection in the Divine workmanship—an imperfection which God is bound to rectify from time to time, and that this is derogatory to the Supreme Wisdom and Power. But such an idea involves an entire misconception of a miracle, which is no interference with the laws of Nature, as we have already seen, but merely a suspension of the particular effect of a particular law, by the introduction of a higher force for a special purpose. A miracle is not related to the physical order in the sense that it is a putting right in it of something that does not work well in Nature. It is concerned with a wholly different order of being, and is a manifestation of the Divine.

The Deistic objection

Certainly, if there were no distinction between body and soul, if there were no moral order as well as physical, if the human soul were not immortal, and possessed of free will, and if there were no obligations to God on the part of man, miracles would, though possible, be superfluous and incomprehensible.

But we must now proceed to ask, whether miracles, being possible, are probable. Is it likely that the great First Cause is going to

step in and interfere with the working of natural laws at the instance, or for the special benefit of, an insignificant human being? All that I have hitherto said goes to prove the extreme probability of the miraculous. The goodness of God, and the immortality of the soul, make it in the highest degree likely. God has not created man and cast him adrift. He has not made him subject, without appeal, to the blind forces of Nature. For what purpose has He endowed him with free will, as has been established in one of the Westminster Lectures of last year,[1] unless it is that He is attentive and ready to help the creature to attain the end for which he was made? The very freedom of man's will demands that God should go to any length to help and preserve that creature which cannot act without the daily and hourly help of its Maker. And if a human parent will lay aside all ordinary rules, to save and help his child in its hour of extreme need, what laws may God not be willing, as He is able, to transcend, in order that His rational creature may attain to the end for which he was made?

Probability

[1] See *The Freedom of the Will*, Westminster Lectures, 1905.

We are too apt, in considering the order of the physical universe, to forget that of the moral, of which moral evil is a violation. We have but to look around us, nay, we need but examine our own acts, to find that we use our free will to break the natural laws of right and wrong. Herein lies the problem of evil, which has already been discussed in this present course.[1] The very fact that the human race has fallen away, and daily falls away, from the natural moral standard, calls for intervention by God.

The laws of Nature give testimony to the existence of the Law-giver, but something more than that is clearly needed, by the fact of the existence of moral evil, if man is to attain the end for which he was made. His will requires strengthening, and it is precisely by abnormal manifestations of Divine Power, in other words, by the miraculous, that this end is in part to be accomplished. As God has made man for a purpose, He must needs wish and will that he attain that purpose; and as He is infinitely good, He must spare no means, consistent with the freedom of the will, which may help man to realise the chief object of his existence.

[1] See *Evil: Its Nature and Cause*, in this series.

Hence again, the miraculous is in the highest degree probable.

Now, granting that miracles are what I assert them to be, intrinsically possible, and highly probable; before passing on to the consideration of whether they have actually occurred, let us ask ourselves what are the criteria by which we may recognise the miraculous. In any miracle we may distinguish four factors — the historical occurrence or fact, its nature, its cause, and the end for which it is worked. Consequently, we shall have four different means of establishing the miraculous, and of verifying it.

The criteria of the miraculous

We shall first of all ask ourselves *what* has occurred, and this will be answered by witnesses of the event.

1. The facts proved by evidence

We are brought face to face with the nature and value of human testimony and the laws of evidence. With this I shall deal when speaking of the actual occurrence of miracles.

Secondly, we must inquire into the nature of the fact, whether, in other words, the event is explicable on physically natural grounds or not.

2. Nature of Fact. Is it possible to natural forces?

Under the consideration of this point, we shall have to ask ourselves whether

the occurrence comes under one of the three ranks or divisions of miracles, to which I have referred—that is to say, whether it is of such a character as to transcend all the possible forces of Nature, or only to transcend them in the particular case, or only in the especial manner in which the event has taken place. If so, it is at once removed from the realm of natural causation. It is precisely in this last class of miracles that difficulties may arise. Before deciding that a miracle of the third rank has occurred, we must carefully eliminate the possibility of natural causation arising from any single force or any combination of forces.

Thirdly, we have to ask whether the alleged miracle fulfils our definition, in being due to Divine intervention, or whether it is such as may be explained by præter-natural action, as, for instance, the natural action of intelligences other than human, assuming that these exist. In the latter case it would not be a real miracle, because, though possibly transcending the powers of Nature, it would not be worked by Divine authority. It would lack the sign-manual of God, the stamp of its being official,

3. The Cause. Is it God?

as we should say in worldly affairs of a different order.

As I have already said, a pure intelligence by his natural power over matter, caused by his deeper acquaintance with the laws and forces of the universe—such an intelligence might be able to work wonderful phenomena, which should transcend, or appear to transcend, the action of natural forces ; but, unless he acts by an especial command from God, his work is not miraculous, but only præternatural.

If, again, the alleged miracle is worked by a man whose life is opposed to the dictates of natural goodness, we have solid grounds for doubt, as, though God can delegate miraculous power to such a being, we know that He does not usually do so. In such a case we are protected from error, by examining the alleged miracle by means of the other criteria which we are considering. But it may be urged, if we have before us a sensible effect which transcends, or appears to transcend, the powers of Nature, how do we know that such effect is not the result of the action of some evil intelligence which is higher than the human? How can we distinguish between such an occurrence and a true miracle ordained by God?

Our safeguard lies in regarding the *end* for which such occurrence takes place. If it comes from God, the Divine glory must be its object; if it comes from an evil spirit, its motive will reveal itself as one which tends to lead man astray from the path of natural right.

In all this argument it must be borne in mind that Divine Revelation has not been taken into count at all, but has been deliberately put to one side, so that no charge may be made of arguing in a vicious circle.

4. The Object of a Miracle

Fourthly, we have to ask ourselves about the end or aim for which the miracle was worked. That must always be the Divine glory, and the edification and instruction of man in the attributes of God. It can never be worked for self-glorification, or in favour of anything which militates against man's natural sense of right and wrong, or against any of the attributes of God, such as are discoverable by the unaided human reason.

Again, a miracle is always evidential, but not necessarily evidential of the truth of some definite doctrine, or of some particular form of religious belief. It may merely bear witness to one or other of the Divine attributes, or to the well-ordered life of some particular indi-

vidual. Hence a miracle might be worked apart from Christianity altogether, and among people who profess Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or any other form of religion, but it would be no necessary testimony to the truth of these creeds themselves.

A miracle worked in support of a revealed truth can only witness for the religion that comes from God, otherwise Infinite Truth would be giving its approval to error, and this is impossible. If God has pledged Himself by contract in His relationship to Christians, He has not thereby necessarily deprived Himself of the power and right to deal with those who are not of the Christian Faith ; and hence, if miracles are announced as having occurred amongst non-Christian peoples, there is nothing to cause astonishment. Assuming that such events have taken place, it is idle to argue, as some have done, that this very fact disproves their reality, since God would thus be witnessing to the truth of religions which are diametrically opposed to each other, and so would be approving of the true and the false at the same time. "The miracles of different religions destroy each other, and destroy at the same time these very religions." Such is

the argument, but, as we have seen, this idea is based upon a misapprehension of the necessary ends for which the miraculous may be worked. Once again I repeat that a miracle, whilst necessarily evidential to the attributes of God, is not necessarily evidential to, or worked to establish the truth of, some definite creed or religion. The great point to be borne in mind is that the end and aim of the miraculous is God's glory and man's instruction. By the very necessity of God's nature, as seen by reason, everything created, every act of God in His dealings with man, must have as its final end the glory of the Creator. Much more must this be the case with a direct Divine interference. Whatever then is opposed to the attributes of God, or tends to draw man away from natural right, must be non-miraculous. It may be præternatural, but it can never come from God.

Actuality of Miracles

And now we come to the question whether miracles have ever occurred.

Before answering it, however, let me say once for all that no Christian is asked to believe in miracles for which the evidence is insufficient. If, in reading of certain ecclesiastical miracles, the testimony for such seems to us incomplete,

or indeed entirely wanting, it is perfectly at our option to believe or disbelieve them. The Christian Church, in demanding from its children an assent to the possibility of miracles, does not bind them to a belief in any definite miraculous occurrence which may be related in its history, save, of course, those contained in the pages of Holy Scripture. Here the motives of credibility are of a different order.

If we are told that a certain saint worked miracles in his lifetime, or through his relics after death, or that a particular statue of the Madonna was seen to move its eyes, we are at perfect liberty to believe or disbelieve, according to the value of the testimony on which these events are narrated.

There is again a class of occurrences which borders on the miraculous, and is composed of graces or favours granted by God to individuals. There are few human beings upon whom these have not been bestowed from time to time. They are personal, and have weight with the individual soul, though of no great evidential value as a proof of Divine intervention. They form the personal factor in religion, and are recognised as direct dealings of God with the individual soul.

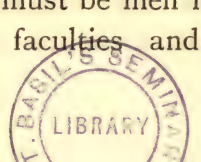
Rationalists allow their existence as a kind of religious instinct which has a strong influence upon the mind. Such, for instance, are a sudden impulse which prevents a man from going on board a vessel that is lost in the voyage, marvellous cases of protection in danger, and so forth.

Let us then pass on at once to the consideration as to whether miracles have occurred or not.

The evidence needed to prove the occurrence of the miraculous

And here, at the very outset, I am confronted with the question which I left over for treatment, namely, what is the nature of the evidence which establishes the fact of a miraculous occurrence? It is human testimony—the same kind of evidence by which scientific men witness to the existence of some newly discovered comet or star—the same kind of testimony by which all the facts of history and the daily occurrences of life are established. The proof may be more rigorous and searching in the case of the miraculous, but the nature of the testimony is identical. The witnesses to the miraculous, as to any other important event, must be men in the possession of unimpaired faculties and senses — men

Character of witnesses



without bias, with no ulterior motive or object to serve in affirming or denying—men who are trustworthy, honest, and capable of observing that which comes under their senses. They need not necessarily be able to understand, explain, or draw any inference from what they see, any more than the observer of a comet may be able to explain its nature, or say why it is in a particular part of the heavens. All history and human experience are based on such evidence.

Neither is it important that *all* men should have observed the miraculous occurrence, or even that a large number should have done so, any more than in the case of the comet. Scientific men laughed to scorn the actual occurrence, nay, even the possibility, of many things which to-day are accepted as established facts. This they did, because they refused to accept the testimony of some of their contemporaries who had observed phenomena which appeared to contradict the laws of Nature as then known. Some of them denied, for instance, the motion of the earth round the sun, until the weight of evidence became too strong for them. "When Benjamin Franklin brought the subject of lightning conductors

before the Royal Society, he was laughed at as a dreamer. . . . When Young put forth his wonderful proofs of the undulatory theory of light, he was equally hooted at as absurd, by the popular scientific writers of the day. *The Edinburgh Review* called upon the public to put Thomas Gray into a strait jacket for maintaining the practicability of railroads. Sir Humphrey Davy laughed at the idea of London ever being lighted with gas. When Stephenson proposed to use locomotives on the Liverpool and Manchester railway, learned men gave evidence that it was impossible that they could go even twelve miles an hour. Another great scientific authority declared it to be equally impossible for ocean steamers ever to cross the Atlantic. The French Academy of Sciences ridiculed the great astronomer Arago, when he wanted even to discuss the subject of the electric telegraph. Medical men ridiculed the stethoscope when it was first discovered. Painless operations during the mesmeric coma were pronounced impossible, and therefore impostures."[1]

There is a consideration which ought ever

[1] *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, by Alfred Russel Wallace, pp. 17, 18.

to be borne in mind by a certain class of thinkers and writers. Learning and knowledge are relative terms. The most advanced scientist of this twentieth century has no right to look down upon his less proficient brother of, say, three hundred years ago. He should remember what will in all probability be thought of his modicum of knowledge by scientists who shall live three hundred years from now. This century has not the exclusive possession of brilliant intellects. During the years that have preceded our own, have lived many of the greatest thinkers the world has ever known—many of the noblest writers that have graced the world of literature. Such thoughts as these should make men hesitate to reject with scorn opinions and observations which do not coincide with their own.

If a thousand years ago somebody had declared that he could communicate with far distant places by means of wireless telegraphy, he would promptly have been considered a lunatic. Had somebody else corroborated the statement, by saying that he had received the message, it would have been held that there was a collusion between the two to perpetrate a fraud. If several persons had made the

statement, the probability is that the whole thing would have been put down to Satanic agency. Yet, despite the adverse opinion of the best men of that day, the message might have been sent and received; and in any case it was a possibility, as subsequent events have shown. It would have been considered in those days, by such men as Hume, as a violation of the laws of Nature, and as contrary to the universal experience of mankind; and yet it was none the less a really existing force in Nature, although it had escaped the observation of men up to that time.

Certain scientists and philosophers should learn a lesson from this, to be careful, and to think twice before they declare as undeserving of their consideration, occurrences reported by others than themselves, which do not exactly fall in with what they think to be possible or impossible.

Hume's objection to miracles

The great objection which has been urged against the acceptance of the miraculous has been framed by Hume, when he says that it is more probable that human testimony should err than that there should be an exception to a natural law. He declares the laws of Nature to be

unchangeable and inviolable, and this on the ground that observation has established the fact. Yet, what is this very observation but human testimony—the very self-same kind of evidence by which the miraculous is established? If, then, human testimony is untrustworthy, the very laws of nature are unreliable, as we have no satisfactory evidence on which to establish them. Here are Hume's own words: "A miracle is a violation of the laws of Nature;"—we have already seen that this is not the fact—"and, as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."

Put briefly, the argument runs thus: Experience proves that no exception has ever occurred in the laws of Nature, therefore no exception can ever occur.

In the first place, to say that no exception has ever occurred, and from this to infer that therefore none ever can occur, is hardly logical. But if this argument were a good one, no new fact in Nature, no new force, could ever be discovered. Even in this twentieth century our scientific knowledge of many of the forces

of Nature is only partial; and the discovery of some new force, whilst not upsetting any real law of Nature as already known, may cause a re-consideration and re-adjustment of our present statements with regard to some of the powers and laws in the universe. The atomic theory, for example, has had to be re-stated in the light of the division of atoms into corpuscles, and possibly also into electrons.

In the next place, Hume says that a universal testimony has established the fact that there are no exceptions to the laws of Nature—that is to say, that there is no evidence for the miraculous. This is not true, and is a begging of the whole question, for we have a vast amount of human evidence in favour of the occurrence of miracles. We have but to appeal to the pages of sacred and profane history, and the annals of the world, to find human testimony in abundance. Some of it has been proved to be incontrovertible, as, for instance, in the case of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. Many, very many, miracles have been established as facts, and that on human evidence of the most reliable description, which at once disproves Hume's statement that all human

experience is against the occurrence of the miraculous.

Dealing with another of this philosopher's arguments, Professor Flint[1] points out the absurdity of the statement that even if the evidence of a sufficient number of competent witnesses could be adduced so as to constitute a full proof of the occurrence of the miraculous, there would still remain a full proof against it, and we should therefore not be justified in believing in the alleged miracles. There would be a complete proof in favour of the miraculous, and an equally complete proof against it. But surely this is an absurdity, and shows to what folly a man can commit himself, when he begins the consideration of a subject with his mind already made up in favour of a conclusion against which he will listen to no arguments, or at least will give them no weight.

Hume, like Strauss, assumes the impossibility of the miraculous, and then proceeds in an attempt to show that no evidence can make it possible. Of course it cannot, if the miraculous be an impossibility; but that is just part of the question under discussion, and miracles have already been shown to be possible.

[1] *Agnosticism*, p. 136.

In the second part of his treatise, Hume says: "There is not to be found in all history any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men of such unquestioned good sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood: and at the same time attesting facts, performed in such a public manner, and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable; all which circumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men."[1]

Presumably, then, if Hume found such a combination, he would be obliged to believe in what he has declared impossible.

Yet here is a statement further on in the same treatise! "There surely never was a greater number of miracles ascribed to one person, than those which were lately said to have been wrought in France upon the tomb of Abbé Paris, the famous Jansenist, with

[1] *Essays of David Hume*, p. 527, Grant Richards.

whose sanctity the people were so long deluded. The curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, were everywhere talked of as the usual effects of that holy sepulchre. But what is more extraordinary, many of the miracles were immediately proved upon the spot, before judges of unquestioned integrity, attested by witnesses of credit and distinction, in a learned age, and on the most eminent theatre that is now before the world. Nor is this all; a relation of them was published, and dispersed everywhere; nor were the Jesuits, though a learned body, supported by the civil magistrate, and determined enemies to those opinions, in whose favour the miracles were said to have been wrought, ever able distinctly to refute them. Where shall we find such a number of circumstances agreeing to the corroboration of one fact?

"And what have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses but the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events which they relate? And this, surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation."[1]

[1] Pp. 535, *sqq.*

I have quoted these two statements of Hume, with the object of pointing out his inconsistency ; and I am not here concerned at all with the question whether the occurrences at the tomb of the Abbé Paris were facts, or whether they were of a miraculous nature. That is beyond the point under our consideration.

According to the latter quotation from Hume, although he has all the requisites that he lays down as necessary to establish the occurrence of the miraculous, when he has them, he refuses the evidence, and falls back upon his pure assumption that the miraculous is impossible. Is this rational?

He has before him what he deems necessary to prove the occurrence of a miracle, but because it does not agree with his own personal opinions and gratuitous assumptions, he refuses the evidence, and sets up himself and his views against the whole world and all the laws of human testimony.

I commenced this section of my task by asking whether miracles have ever occurred. According to Hume's laws of evidence, and his emphatic declarations as to what occurred at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, if this philosopher had been a consistent man, he would

have been obliged to say that he had come across instances of the miraculous under unlooked-for and unexpected circumstances.

It has been said that the miraculous destroys the argument for the existence of God, which is based on the order, regularity, and unity of the laws and forces of Nature. But miracles are no interference with such harmony. We have seen that they do not violate or suspend any of these laws. So far from the miraculous being destructive of the proof of God's existence as drawn from Nature, it is the reverse. It is confirmatory; for it shows us the great First Cause as not merely existing, but as personally interested in the creatures He has made. It may be quite true to say with the scientist there are no *natural* exceptions to natural law; but this would only be another argument for the miraculous, as, if experience and human testimony showed that from time to time exceptions had occurred, we should be unable to look into Nature for their explanation. We should at once have to go to a force other than natural to seek their causation; and hence we should come face to face with a miracle.

And now let us proceed to ask: Is there any evidence for the actual occurrence of the miraculous?

Is there any evidence for particular miracles?

In the last course of lectures one of the greatest miracles, the Resurrection of Christ, was shown to be a fact established by all the laws of human evidence. One such proof is enough to demonstrate the actuality of the miraculous.

It is impossible in the course of a short lecture to enter at length into particular miracles.

All through history, whether secular or religious, we find the assertion of the miraculous. During the whole course of the Old Testament narrative, viewed purely from the historical standpoint, as during that of the New, regarded in the same light, miracles are constantly asserted to have taken place. It was not, as some writers have stated, only at particular epochs that they occurred, although they may be found clustered in greater numbers at some particular period. We find them occurring at least occasionally over the whole of the Old Testament period. The same assertion is true for the whole of the Apostolic and post-apostolic times down to our own; and,

as Huxley says, if miracles have ever taken place, there is no earthly reason why they should have stopped short, say, at the death of the last of the Apostles.

Evidence proves the contrary to be the fact; and inasmuch as that evidence being recent and capable of minute and detailed investigation, is, in some sense, and to some minds, more convincing, it should be directed backward as a search-light, upon the alleged miraculous occurrences of the past, and so render at least some of these events highly probable. If miracles have happened recently, and are occurring to-day, it is probable that such things took place in the past; and the narration of them in records of bygone days becomes no longer an object of suspicion, but a subject for the consideration of the evidence that is to be adduced in their favour.

Here, and now, in the full blaze of modern progress and modern science, we have the occurrence of miracles, and yet there are found men to disbelieve, because with their own eyes they have not seen them, as though no human beings save themselves were true observers, or reliable witnesses.

There are miracles to-day

God by His very nature is, and must be, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and His arm is not shortened, nor has His care for His creatures in any way relaxed. He can work the miraculous as much in the twentieth century as in the first, and if need arises, we may presume that He will do so. Only a comparatively small proportion of the world is as yet Christian, and of those who profess that name, many are only so in outward seeming. The existence and history of the Christian Church is a standing miracle, and may not call upon God to display the miraculous as frequently as in the early days of Christianity; but at least we may expect that from time to time He will mercifully attest the truths of Revealed Religion by a display of the miraculous. As a matter of fact, God still bears witness to His attributes, and comes to the help of man's needs, by working effects that no natural laws can explain.

"The first official census of the British Empire as one great whole was issued (March 8, 1906) as a Parliamentary paper. It shows that its area is nearly 12,000,000 miles, and its population close on 400,000,000 souls. . . .

The following figures show the official summary of the Empire's religious creeds :—

Hindus . . .	208,000,000
Mohammedans . .	94,000,000
Christians . . .	58,000,000
Buddhists . . .	12,000,000
Others . . .	23,000,000
Total . .	395,000,000[1]

So that, in our own empire alone, there are only fifty-eight millions of Christians of all denominations. And amongst those how many are only so in name! Against these fifty-eight millions there are three hundred and thirty-seven millions who need the miraculous to demonstrate the truths of Christianity almost as much as it was needed nineteen centuries ago, although, as I have said, the very existence of the Christian Church is in itself a standing miracle, and in some way obviates the need for the multiplication of the miraculous. I say nothing of the millions outside our own dominions, where Christianity is still in the small minority.

All through the long years of the world's history has God from time to time manifested

[1] *Tribune,* March 9, 1906.

His power, His mercy, and His goodness, by miracle and supernatural intervention, not in one country alone, nor at one period only, but everywhere, and always. In these latter days has the truth of this been exemplified, amongst other places, at Lourdes.

Lourdes

Time will only allow me to make a bare reference to one out of the scores of cases which have occurred at that village.

Marie Lemarchand was cured there, in a manner which it is difficult not to recognise as miraculous, of a most pronounced attack of lupus, whereby her face was rendered hideous. A huge sore covered both her cheeks; the lower eyelids, lower part of the nose, and lower lip, and the tongue, were also involved. These wounds were suppurating, and the smell from them was most offensive. In addition to all this, the apices of both lungs were invaded by consumption, and she had spat blood, which proves that the lupus was of a tubercular character. She reached Lourdes on August 20, 1892, by the "white train" from Paris. Zola was there at the time, and he saw her dreadful condition, and has described her in his novel

Two modern miracles

Marie Lemarchand

entitled *Lourdes*, under the name of Elise Rouquet. On the following day she went to the Grotto to bathe in the water, and immediately before entering was seen by Dr de Hombres, who happened to be there on the spot. No sooner had she entered the bath than she was instantly cured. Every ulcer disappeared, and there was nothing more of them to be seen than the newly-formed skin, which was of a somewhat livid character, and marked the places where the disease had been. The same Dr de Hombres saw her as she left the Grotto, and has left on record his testimony to the fact of the instantaneous cure. She was confronted by Zola, who refused to look at her. He acknowledged the cure, but in a disingenuous manner tried to give the impression in his novel that it was only effected after many applications of the water, and after some lapse of time, which is not the fact. If it be attempted to explain this miracle by saying that it was due to the medicinal character of the water, this hypothesis is untenable, as an analysis of the water has demonstrated that there is no such property in it. The water of Lourdes is common drinking water. It is impossible to suppose that the application of a little cold

water could have wrought so instantaneous and so wonderful a cure. It is equally useless to attribute the cure to suggestion, for the case was not one of nerves; and even had it been, no cure from suggestion is ever instantaneous. Time is always required, as the annals of medicine show; and above all, neither suggestion, nor hypnotism, nor faith healing, have ever instantaneously cured suppurating ulcers. In a cure effected naturally, by the use of mineral springs, science shows that different springs affect different diseases. Here, at Lourdes, *natural drinking* water is the means of cure of the most varied diseases, as the documents at the Bureau des Constatations prove.

This case, in the manner in which the recovery was effected, is beyond the forces and capabilities of natural remedies, and is an example of a miracle of the third rank, and it belongs to the end of last century only.

Here is another most remarkable miracle, not worked at Lourdes itself, but at the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Oostacker, in Belgium, and by means of the water from Lourdes which is kept at that place.

Another recent miracle in Belgium

Now, although a Catholic, and a believer

in the miraculous nature of many of the cures at Lourdes and other places, I do not for one moment ask either Catholics, Protestants, or those who hold other creeds or no creed at all, to believe in the case quoted, or in that which I am about to relate, without the proof afforded by witnesses of the most reliable character, medical, surgical, professional, and general.

I am, however, not aware that expert evidence is necessary before one is justified in declaring that a wound that one saw open to-day has been subsequently healed. If anybody saw a man this morning with his face rendered hideous by ulceration and deformation, and to-night saw the same man with his face completely cured and in its natural condition, he would be as good a witness to these facts as the greatest scientist, or surgeon, or lawyer, in the world, provided his senses are in a normal condition; and it would be a farce to require that only an expert should be able to give valid and satisfactory evidence in order that so simple a fact should be established. It is quite a different matter when we come to consider how, and in what manner, the cure has been accomplished. By

all means, then, let us have every possible form of investigation.

In asking you, therefore, to listen to the narrative I am about to place before you, I beg of you to approach the subject without bias, and to disregard religious prejudice. Listen to the evidence, weigh it, consider it as you would do any other weighty matter, and see if the event so witnessed does not in all respects fulfil the requirements of the miraculous, by transcending all the powers of Nature in the manner in which it was accomplished, and whether also it has not God for its cause.

Miraculous cure of broken bones and long-standing ulcers in case of de Rudder at Oostacker in Belgium

Peter de Rudder, an agricultural labourer, aged forty-four years, was in the employment of Viscount de Bus, and lived at Jabbeke, a village between Bruges and Ostend, in Belgium, when on February 16, 1867, he sustained a fracture of the left leg, in which both the bones, tibia and fibula, were broken below the knee joint. The limb was put up in a starch bandage by Dr Affanaer of Oudenburg. Owing to the severe suffering of the patient, the surgeon removed the bandage, when he found an ulcer

communicating with the fractured bones, which were bathed in pus. Periostitis, or inflammation of the outer sheath of the bone, had set in. There was also a large purulent wound on the back of the foot. After many months of futile treatment other advice was sought, and Drs Jacques and Verriot of Bruges were consulted, as also Dr Van Hœstenberghe of Stachille. All agreed that the case was incurable, and that only amputation remained. Then the Viscount sought the opinion of Professor Thiriart of Brussels, who confirmed that of his confrères. De Rudder refused to have the operation performed, and for a year kept his bed. During the succeeding several years he got about on crutches. There remained all this time the dreadful wound, at the bottom of which the diseased bones were visible, now separated from the upper portions by a distance of one inch and a fifth, due to the removal of a sequestrum, or portion of dead bone. The wound was continually bathed in the most offensive pus. The unfortunate man was able so to manipulate the lower part of the leg as to make the diseased ends of the bones protrude through the wound; and he could twist it in such manner that he could turn the

left foot to the back of the leg and make the heel occupy its place. In this terrible condition he sought permission on April 5, 1875—that is, eight years after the accident—from the new Viscount, for the old one had died in the meantime, to go to the Grotto of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Oostacker, a place of pilgrimage much venerated in Belgium. In the month of January in the same year, Dr Affanaer had seen the wound and certified to its condition, as already described. Later still, Dr Verrier corroborated the state of the patient. Nine days before the pilgrimage, certain of De Rudder's neighbours saw and examined the wound. On April 5, the day on which he asked permission to go to Oostacker, the Viscountess herself visited him, and saw the dreadful condition of the leg. Later, on the same day, a neighbour assisted in dressing the limb, and saw the broken ends of the bones, the interval between the upper and lower fragments, the open ulcers, and the swollen condition of the leg. On the following day, April 6, the evening before De Rudder set out for Oostacker, all these details were again seen by other witnesses. On April 7, he set out for the Grotto, and with

great difficulty was lifted into the train. Arrived at his destination, unable of course to kneel, he was helped to a seat in front of the spot where a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes had been erected. There he drank of the water, and in fervent prayer besought Jesus Christ through the prayers of His Blessed Mother to restore to health his broken limb, that he might be able once more to work for the support of his wife and children. Suddenly he rose, leaving his crutches near the bench, and walked to the Grotto, kneeling there in prayer. Then springing to his feet he burst forth in thanks to the great Creator, declaring that he was cured. Accompanied by his wife and a great crowd, he walked, unaided and without his crutches, to the castle of the Marchioness of Costabonne, using his once broken leg as freely as the other.

There it was found that the swelling had gone, the bandages had fallen off, the wounds on the leg and foot had disappeared, the upper and lower ends of the two bones had been re-united, and there was no longer the interval of one inch and a fifth between them. The two legs were of identically the same length, and of equal soundness and value.

For twenty-three years De Rudder lived and worked in the employment of the Viscount, and eventually died from pneumonia, at the age of seventy-five years, on March 22, 1898. During all those long years he never had any trouble with the leg that once had been in so terrible a condition. The cure was not only instantaneous, but permanent.

The case had become so famous, that a year after his burial, on March 24, 1899—only seven years ago—permission was obtained to exhume the body, and in the presence of witnesses Dr Van Hœstenberghe removed the legs, and a careful and scientific examination of the bones of both legs was made. The details are too long and too technical for me to enter into now; but it suffices to say that the result of the examination was but to corroborate the non-natural method of the cure. The bones are now in the possession of Dr Alfred Deschamps, doctor in medicine and natural science, and now a priest, at Antwerp. Sworn evidence—medical, surgical, legal, and general—is still in existence, establishing the fact of this miraculous cure beyond all shadow of doubt.[1]

I have placed all this evidence before one

[1] For particulars refer to last page of lecture.

of the most distinguished of the Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons, himself not a Catholic, and he stated to me : " If the evidence in this case be true, there is only one explanation of the cure, and that is, the miraculous."

Assuredly such narratives, and this is by no means the only one, fulfil in all respects what I explained to be the nature of a miracle ; and they are nineteenth-century occurrences. No possible natural force could heal a deep and purulent wound instantaneously ; no natural force could unite in a moment the diseased ends of broken bones, least of all when a portion of bone one inch and a fifth in length was wanting ; and no natural force could possibly supply instantaneously the piece of bone that was needed to fill up that gap. We may apply to it all the criteria of the miraculous. It was a sensible event witnessed by numerous reliable people. It transcended the power of Nature, and was of the third rank of miracles. It was worked by God, for it was in direct answer to prayer. It gave glory to His Name, and was for the edification of all who should hear of it, and thus complied with all the criteria whereby we may be assured of the miraculous.

The most exacting tests of reliable evidence are here fulfilled to the letter; and thus, whatever may seem obscure in the narration of the miraculous events which occurred hundreds of years ago, is made clearly probable and credible by what is happening under our eyes to-day.

Conclusion

As I commenced, so I finish. A miracle was defined to be "a sensible effect produced by God, which transcends all the forces of Nature." Its possibility and probability have been demonstrated; and the divisions, nature, and criteria of miracles have been discussed in the light of the definition. On examining individual miraculous events we have seen them comply with the requirements of what has been laid down as necessary for a miracle; and lastly, the continuance of miracles down to our own day has been proved by indisputable examples.

Had the lines on which I have proceeded permitted me to make use of Revealed Religion, my case could have been materially strengthened; but I have of deliberate purpose avoided the use of any such evidence.

Of necessity the whole subject has had to be treated in a brief and cursory manner; but I trust that sufficient data have been given to

show that miracles are not merely possible and probable, but that, at least in certain cases, they have actually occurred. I am not called upon to prove the reality of every alleged miracle; but if the principles laid down be applied to many of these events, they will be seen to comply with all that is needed to establish their miraculous character.

APPENDIX I

Note.—For detailed account of the De Rudder Case, with documents and photographs, see :—

Histoire Critique des Evênements de Lourdes. By Bertrin. Published in Paris, 1905. (Librairie V. Lecoffre.)

Un Miracle Contemporain. By Dr Alfred Deschamps. Published in Brussels. (39 Rue Antoine Dansaert.)

Lourdes, Le Miracle devant la Science. By Dr Boissarie. Published in Paris. (Librairie V. Lecoffre, 90 Rue Bonaparte.)

Guérison subite d'une Fracture. Récit et Etude Scientifique. By Drs Van Hœstenberghe, E. Roger, and A. Deschamps. (Librairie Scientifique.) L. Lagaert, Brussels.

A full account of this miracle is being brought out in English by the Rev. M. F. Rankin, and will shortly appear. Together with two English surgeons he investigated the matter in Belgium, and personally interviewed witnessess still living, including Dr Van Hœstenberghe of Stachille, who treated De Rudder professionally.

APPENDIX II

A SHORT list of works that may be useful in pursuing the study of the miraculous :—

S. Augustine. *De Civitate Dei.*

Summa contra Gentiles of S. Thomas Aquinas. Translated by Fr. Rickaby, S.J. Burns & Oates, 1905. *God and His Creatures*, Book III., Chapter 101, p. 264, *et sqq.*

Zigliara : *System of Philosophy,* Vol. II. ; "Cosmologia," Book III., Chap. 2. *De derogatione legibus mundanis*, Vol. I. ; "Ontologia," Lit. IV., Chap. 1 ; "De Causa."

Cardinal Newman : *Essays on Scriptural and Ecclesiastical Miracles.*

Archbishop Trench : *Notes on the Miracles of our Lord.*

Mozley : *Eight Lectures on Miracles.*

Butler : *Analogy of Religion.*

Paley : *Evidences of Christianity.*

Charles Harris : *Pro Fide.* (Murray.)

Dean Mansel : *Aids to Faith.*

Liddon. *Some Elements of Religion ; Lent Lectures*, 1870.

Miracle. A pamphlet by C. Kegan Paul. Published by Catholic Truth Society.

Miracles. A small treat e by Rev. Brownlow Maitland. (Cassell.)

Bollandists' *Lives of the Saints*.

Read especially lives of SS. Augustine of Hippo, Ambrose of Milan, Hilary of Poitiers, Benedict, Dominic, and Francis Xavier.

PRINTED BY OLIVER AND BOYD, EDINBURGH.

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Pall Mall Gazette: ". . . We cordially welcome these attempts to provide, within a small compass, and in simple language, a series of expositions of the philosophical bases of revealed religion. We heartily commend these little books to the notice of all Christians, and not less heartily to those who, though not of the household of faith, are sufficiently open-minded to obey the precept *Audi alteram partem.*"

Scottish Review: "These lectures are distinctly able productions, containing nothing that a Protestant should object to, and advancing much for which we should be grateful."

Belfast News Letter: "The first volume is a very thoughtful lecture by a well-known Jesuit."

Catholic Times: "We are glad to see the 'Westminster Lectures' in book form. The authors prove positively with as little negative criticism as possible the truths which form their subjects. . . . The reasoning is very plain and forcible."

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Catholic Book Notes: "All are well done and suited for their purpose."

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Ave Maria: "A second series of these admirable discourses on the philosophical defence of Catholic truth is announced. . . . 'The Westminster Lectures' belong to the class of books that, in Bacon's phrase, are to be 'chewed and digested.'"

MARSH, G.W.B.
Miracles.

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